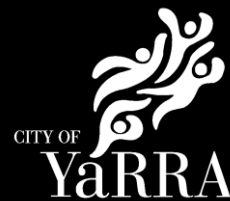


Universal Design and Disability Inclusion Policy - Community Engagement Report



This report provides information on the community consultation for the Universal Design and Disability Inclusion Policy project and reports on the engagement outcomes. The consultation opened on 1 June and closed at 11.59 pm on Sunday 5 July 2026.

Executive Summary

In 2023, Council undertook initial community consultation to inform the future direction of disability inclusion in Yarra, which led to the development of a long-term Universal Design and Disability Inclusion (UD & DI) Policy supported by a Disability Action Plan.

Stage 2 engagement on the draft Policy ran from 1 June to 5 July 2026 through accessible online and face-to-face sessions. 69 participants provided feedback, 75% (45 people) of whom identified as a person with a disability or impairment, or as neurodivergent and/or Autistic, providing valuable input to inform the final Policy.

A breakdown of the main themes are as follows:

Theme 1: Council buildings and facilities

Feedback highlighted the need for accessible entrances, external areas, parking and drop-off points, connected pathways, clear signage, step-free routes, accessible toilets and Changing Places, sensory considerations, and daily operations and procedures that reduce access barriers.

Theme 2: Accessible transit and transport – moving around Yarra

Feedback highlighted that uneven, narrow, cluttered and obstructed footpaths create major access barriers, while safe crossings, rest points, clear wayfinding, lower traffic speeds, pedestrian-priority areas and better separation of path users support mobility for people of all abilities.

Theme 3: Parks, playgrounds and open spaces

Feedback highlighted access barriers in Yarra's parks, playgrounds and open spaces, with calls for more inclusive play spaces, accessible seating, shade, rest areas, quiet and low-sensory spaces, accessible pathways, improved lighting and assistance animal access.

Theme 4: Inclusive services, programs & information

Feedback highlighted the need for Council information, services and programs to be accessible, easy to understand and available through a range of communication channels, supported by inclusive and flexible participation options.

Theme 5: Inclusive participation and employment

Feedback under this theme discussed: Council's role as an inclusive employer and Council's role in leading and advocating for inclusive employment in Yarra.

Theme 6: Equity, fairness and safety

Feedback highlighted the importance of accessible public transport, information, housing, emergency preparedness and advocacy in promoting equity, fairness and safety in Yarra.

Theme 7: Representation, belonging and supporting carers

Feedback under this theme discussed the representation of people with disability, accessible community participation, inclusive civic participation, and acknowledging the value of lived experience. In addition, a strong sub-theme included carer wellbeing.

In response to public exhibition feedback, we suggest minor amendments to strengthen accessibility and inclusion. Suggestions include:

- Strengthening commitments to accessible footpaths, seating, shade and rest points;
- Enhancing inclusive service delivery and disability confidence across Council programs and services
- Clarifying support for local businesses, events and festivals to improve accessibility; and
- Recognising carers as a priority population in the development of Council programs and services.

Engagement approach

Project background

The new Universal Design & Disability Inclusion (UD & DI) Policy replaced the Access and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2024, establishing Council's commitment to using a Universal Design (UD) approach to create a more inclusive, accessible and welcoming community for people of all abilities, identifying key priority areas with objectives and sub-objectives designed to meet this aim.

The UD & DI Policy was developed through community engagement via stage 1 consultation, extensive consultation with the Disability Advisory Committee (DAC), shaping objectives and sub-objectives with reference to, best practice evidence and guidelines on disability rights and inclusion, relevant legislation, the Victorian State Disability Plan 2022–2026, Yarra disability demographic data, benchmarking against other councils, the Council Plan, Council's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, and relevant Council work areas.

Level of community influence

1. Community feedback could influence the scope and direction of the proposed priority areas.
2. Community feedback could influence the strategies and initiatives outlined under the priority areas.
3. Community feedback could influence how the Policy is implemented.

Engagement objective	Measure of success
Inform the community (and any previous participants, if applicable) about this project and let them know how they can share their feedback.	Reach is reported on at the end of the engagement and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• visitors on the Your Say Yarra page• people engaged on our social media channels (including ads) and through email campaigns via Council's e-newsletters.
Reach out to directly impacted community members and invite them to participate and have their say.	Identified stakeholders who are most affected and invited them to participate in the consultation.
Seek feedback from the community and receive valuable responses to the engagement questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 5% of visits to the project page result in the user providing feedback• Responses received relate to the topic and help finalise the project.
Make the engagement as accessible and inclusive as possible to allow everyone in the community an opportunity to participate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project officers actively sought to remove any known barriers to allow all those affected to participate.• Accessible and inclusive language was used, and interpreters (when required) and translated content (online and print) were provided.• Alternative feedback methods were offered in addition to the online feedback method.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The physical pop-up locations were accessible to people living with a disability.
Share with participants how their feedback contributed to Council's final decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community and other stakeholders were updated on the consultation outcome and how their feedback informed the final decision. The Engagement Report was published on the Your Say Yarra engagement website.

Engagement methods:

		
Online survey tool hosted through the Your Say Yarra engagement platform	<p>4 pop-ups at the following locations across the municipality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library Gleadell Street Market Richmond Library Online engagement session (planned but cancelled due to low interest) 	<p>Targeted stakeholder engagement with the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'the lab' a tech gaming group for neurodivergent people at BN North Fitzroy Library Neurodivergent community members attend the Collage club at Richmond Library Neighbourhood Houses (North Carlton, Collingwood and Alphington Community Centre) various pop-in times Stand at the Community Grocer Market held on the grounds of Elizabeth Street, Richmond Public Housing. Empower and Empower + engagement – popped into sessions and explained the survey to staff to disseminate Carers walk engagement – engagement with carers who undertake a regular walking program

Engagement promotion

Note: This section will be completed by the community engagement lead

Highly impacted stakeholder	Promotion and reach
People with Disability	

<p>Broader disability community (family, friends, partners, carers, advocates and allies of PwD)</p>	<p>All general communications channels and targeted social media ads, which reached 445 people.</p> <p>Accessible formats – accessibility widget on Your Say Yarra engagement platform, easy read project page, easy read and audio versions of Policy.</p> <p>Accessible participation options – in-person, one-on-one phone calls and online engagement sessions were offered.</p> <p>Accessible Your Say Yarra site with plain language and use of icons.</p> <p>Two-Pager of Policy for in-person sessions.</p>
<p>Kids and young people with disability</p>	<p>Targeted engagement session with 'the lab ', a tech gaming group for autistic young people at BN North Fitzroy Library, where 20 people attended.</p> <p>Targeted social media ads reached 445 people.</p>
<p>Yarra Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) Members</p>	<p>A special committee meeting was held in December 2025 to disseminate the Policy among members and collect feedback. DAC meeting in May 2026 to update and gather ideas to guide the community engagement during the exhibition period.</p>

Digital Channels	Email Communications	Physical & In-venue	Delivered to the community
<div>  <p>News item on website Your Say Yarra page</p> <p>493 people engaged with the post on our social media channels (including social media advertisements)</p> </div>	<div>  <p>Yarra Libraries EDM 17,102</p> <p>Yarra Leisure EDM 15,502</p> <p>Yarra Life EDM 5,859</p> <p>Your Say Yarra EDM 2,427</p> <p>Total number of subscribers who opened the email: 40,890</p> </div>	<div>  <p>Postcards at key Council venues</p> <p>Digital screens at the Customer Service Centre</p> </div>	<div>  <p>Yarra Life, general promotion of the opportunity to get involved in Yarra's projects – Yarra-wide (over 54,000 properties)</p> </div>
<p>Paper surveys and postcards were taken to all pop-ups and targeted engagement – merchandise such as key rings with the disability pride flag on them, fidgets, and Disability Pride Month biscuits drew attention at our pop-ups and targeted engagement</p>			

Engagement results

Your Say Yarra project page:

- Visitors** – The number of unique visitors that saw the page.
- Responses** – The number of feedback responses that were submitted.

Visitors	Responses
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718

60

In person engagement opportunities:

In-person event	Approximate number of people we interacted with	Hardcopy surveys completed
Group online , Wednesday 24 June 2026, from 3:30 pm to 4.30 pm	Cancelled due to low interest N/A	N/A
Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library , Saturday 13 June 2026 from 1.30 pm to 3 pm	20	6
Gleadell Street Market , Saturday 20 June 2026 from 10.30 am to 12 midday	25	6
Richmond Library , Tuesday 30 June 2026 from 4.30 pm to 6 pm	12	4
Neighbourhood Houses x 3 (North Carlton, Collingwood and Alphington Community Centre) , various pop-in times	15	6
Community Grocer Market (Richmond Public Housing 106 Elizabeth Street) – Wednesday 1 July 10-11.30	12	1
Empower and Empower + engagement and Carers Walk engagement	15	4
TOTAL	102	27*

Note: If you are not using a survey, please include the engagement method and the number of responses here.

*42 completed independently online; 18 entered into Your Say Yarra as a result of in-person engagement; 9 additional hardcopy surveys (including one Oracle response) could not be entered into Your Say Yarra due to no email address being supplied.

Overall results

Overall, 69 people participated in the engagement; 42 responses were online-only, 26 were collected in person, and 1 was collected via Oracle.

Who did we hear from?

We collected demographic data through the 60 hard and online copies of the engagement tool.

What's your connection to Yarra?	Numbers	Percentage
Live in Yarra, in a property I own (either outright or with a mortgage)	23	38%
Live in Yarra, in a property I rent	14	23%
Own a property in Yarra, but live outside of Yarra	1	2%
Work in Yarra	10	17%

Own a business/business occupier in Yarra	2	3%
Study in Yarra	1	2%
None of the above	12	20%
Prefer not to say	5	8%
Total	68	N/A
What gender do you identify as?	Numbers	Percentage
Man	15	25%
Woman	38	63%
Self-described	3	5%
I prefer not to say	4	7%
Total	60	100%
What is your age range?	Numbers	Percentage
Under 11	2	3%
12 to 17	2	3%
18 to 24	0	0%
25 to 34	6	10%
35 to 49	21	35%
50 to 59	9	15%
60 to 69	9	15%
70 to 84	8	13%
85 and older	1	2%
I prefer not to say	2	3%
Total	60	100%
What suburb do you live in	Numbers	Percentage
Abbotsford	3	5%
Alphington	0	0%
Burnley	0	0%
Carlton North	3	5%
Clifton Hill	2	3%
Collingwood	9	15%
Cremorne	0	0%
Fairfield	2	3%
Fitzroy	3	5%
Fitzroy North	4	7%

Princes Hill	1	2%
Richmond	15	25%
I live outside of Yarra	18	30%
Total	60	100%
Select all that apply. I am....	Numbers	Percentage
Someone who speaks a language other than English at home.	6	10%
A person who was born overseas	11	18%
A member of the LGBTIQA+ community.	7	1%
Someone of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.	1	2%
None of the above.	33	55%
I prefer not to say.	2	3%
Total	60	100%
Which of the following describes you: Select all that apply	Numbers	Percentage
Person with disability	23	38%
Person with a condition that can be a barrier to participating	11	18%
Autistic or neurodivergent person	11	18%
Deaf/deaf person	0	0%
Carer of a person with a disability	10	17%
Family, partner or friend of a person with disability	13	22%
A disability advocate or ally	9	15%
Disability service provider or organisation	2	3%
None of the above	9	15%
I prefer not to say	4	7%
Other	4	7%
Total	96	N/A
Which of the following applies to you?	Numbers	Percentage
Acquired brain injury	0	0%
Chronic illness and related impairment	8	32%
Intellectual disability	1	4%
Cognitive disability	0	0%
Communication difficulty and use assistive technology	0	0%
Developmental delay	0	0%
Neurodevelopmental	1	4%
Neurological impairment	2	8%

Psychosocial	2	8%
Physical	6	24%
Sensory impairment relating to vision, hearing, or speech	2	8%
I prefer not to say	3	12%
Total	25	NA

What we heard and how we responded

Analysis of 69 responses identified 356 relevant comments and suggestions. Overall, feedback on the Policy was positive, and many comments focused on access and inclusion issues in Yarra.

The following comments highlight appreciation for the Policy and efforts to reduce barriers to engagement:

"I am impressed with the research that has been considered in producing this well rounded Yarra disability plan draft, please pass my appreciation to the authors and advisors. I look forward to the final plan providing an effective, action orientated disability and Inclusion plan..."

"I welcome the City of Yarra's commitment to developing a Universal Design and Disability Inclusion Policy. As a disability pensioner, it is encouraging to see Council recognising the importance of designing services, infrastructure and public spaces that are inclusive for everyone. I hope this marks a genuine and lasting commitment to improving accessibility across the municipality....Thank you for inviting the community to contribute to this important Policy. I hope it becomes a practical framework that makes Yarra a municipality where everyone can move about safely, participate fully and feel genuinely included."

"I think you have nailed it."

"...All great!"

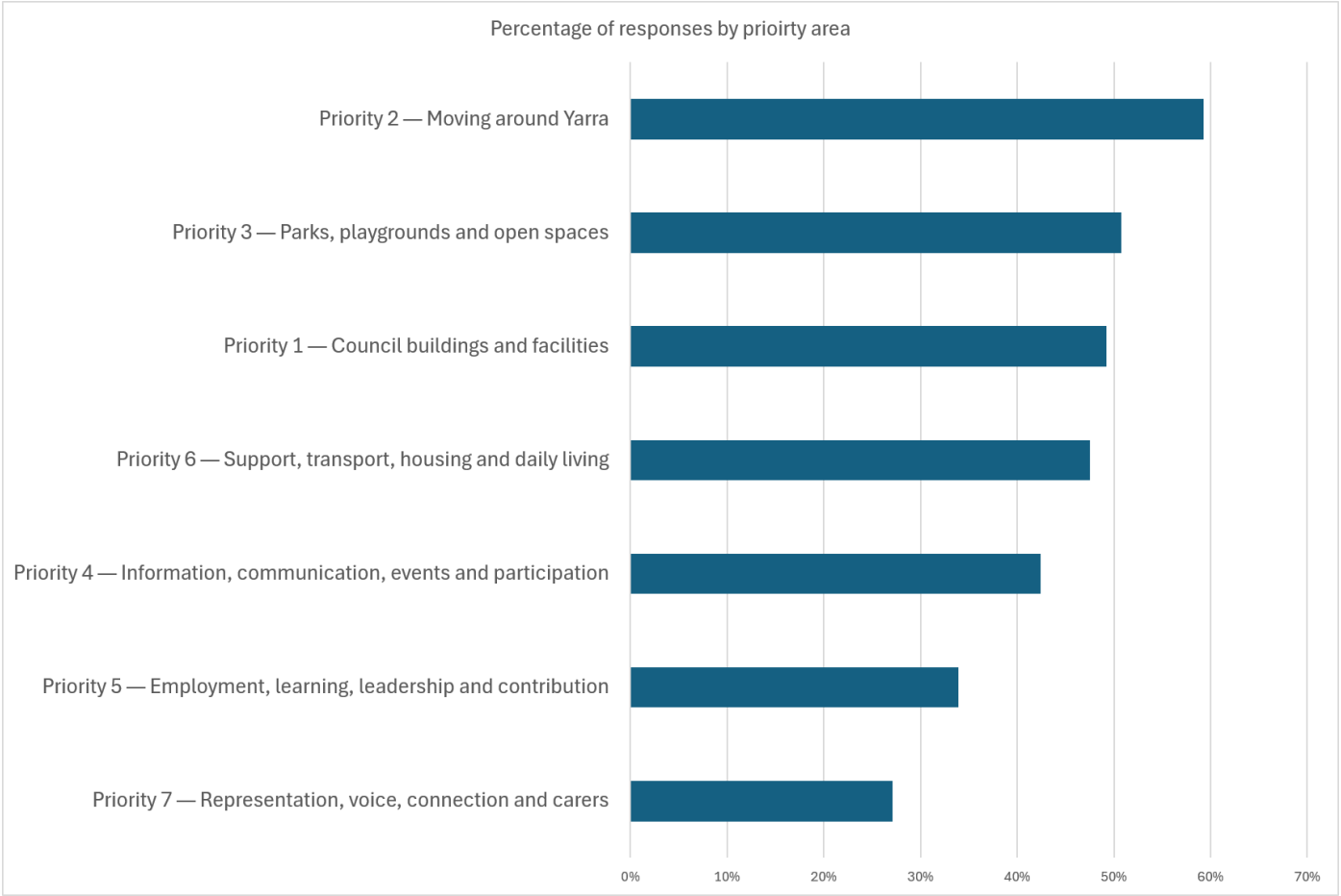
"I think it is a very good initiative, as every human being should have the opportunity to be treated fairly and engage in the society they live in."

"I fully endorse the proposed Disability Inclusion Policy - it's absolutely the right thing to do, and the Council is to be congratulated for developing a comprehensive, inclusive policy that respects the needs of our diverse community."

"That easy read document for this particular design project policy was fabulous. More easy read documents for council information, please."

The feedback is reflected in the following seven themes, and the percentage of comments per theme is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Percentage of comments or responses for each priority area



These figures indicate engagement volume within each priority. They should not be interpreted as a ranking of importance. Fewer participants raised lower-volume issues, but these may still warrant significant action.

A summary of feedback for each theme is shown in the table below:

Feedback Theme 1: Council Buildings and Facilities	
What did we hear	Our response
<p>Respondents noted existing barriers to accessing Council buildings and facilities and recommended areas for improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrivals and entrances – Community members noted that external environments are key to supporting access: accessible parking, drop-off areas, and external pathways should connect via clearly signed, safe, step-free routes. Separate or hidden accessible entrances can prevent people from using buildings independently. • Accessible amenities - Accessible toilets and Changing Places facilities are essential for some people with disability; participants noted that facilities are limited across Yarra. • Inaccessible features - Steps, steep ramps, difficult doors, and narrow circulation areas can limit access and movement within buildings. • Sensory conditions - including lighting, glare, noise, crowding and visual clutter were significant barriers for some participants. • Daily operations matter – feedback indicated that daily operations and procedures, including locked toilets, obstructed paths, furniture, equipment and temporary room layouts can undermine accessibility. 	<p>This feedback aligns with the draft Policy as follows:</p> <p>Priority 1: Accessible & Inclusive Places and Transport.</p> <p>Objective 1.1: Apply a Universal Design approach to all new and upgraded Council buildings, facilities, and open spaces to achieve the best possible accessibility outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue a rolling program of accessibility audits of existing Council buildings to identify access barriers and inform retrofit works. • Use Universal Design to guide all new and upgraded buildings, parks and open-space projects. • Consider opportunities to identify, improve, and upgrade public toilets into more accessible facilities in terms of availability, safety, and wayfinding. • Integrate sensory, cognitive and neurodiversity-friendly design features into upgrades where appropriate (lighting, acoustics, quiet spaces, clear layouts). Located on pages 15-16 of the draft Policy. <p>While no change to the Policy is required, it is noted that the Policy does not inform planning or resourcing for upgrades of existing buildings and facilities.</p> <p>Specific upgrades, locations, and investment priorities will be considered through asset planning, maintenance, and renewal programs, subject to available resources and relevant sites, heritage, statutory, and physical constraints.</p> <p>The feedback also reinforces the need to maintain accessibility during ordinary operations and temporary changes. This will be considered through the operational guide, service procedures and staff capability development rather than through detailed requirements in the Policy itself.</p>
Feedback Theme 2: Accessible Transit and Transport – Moving Around Yarra	
What did we hear	Our response
<p>Feedback highlighted that existing footpaths can present a significant barrier to accessibility and also be a safety issue due to the following concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneven surfaces – bluestone (not sawn), steep crossfalls, damaged paths and poorly aligned kerb ramps were described as significant trip, fall and wheelchair hazards. • Narrow and cluttered footpaths - Participants wanted wider, consistently clear paths, with stronger management of outdoor dining, signs, bins, vegetation, bicycles, scooters, parked vehicles, and construction activity. 	<p>This feedback aligns with the draft Policy's commitments to footpath renewal:</p> <p>Priority 1: Accessible & Inclusive Places and Transport.</p> <p>Objective 1.2: Improve footpaths, kerbs, lighting, and other elements of the public realm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen internal coordination to identify, prioritise and address accessibility barriers across the public realm. • Continue an ongoing program of footpath renewal, kerb ramp installation, and trip hazard removal. • Maintain tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs) in priority crossings and high-traffic routes.

- **Safer crossings** - longer crossing times, effective audible signals and smooth transitions between roads and footpaths were noted as important.
- **Rest and comfort** - Participants called for more seating and shade, as opportunities to rest are essential for some community members.
- **Wayfinding and lighting** – Participants noted that improved, consistent lighting and clear wayfinding are important for supporting movement.
- **Improved amenity** - Some participants supported lower traffic speeds, pedestrian-priority areas, and clearer separation between pedestrians, cyclists, and other path users.

- Continue improving seating, rest points, and shade across activity centres, parks, and paths.
- Continue to improve street lighting in key pedestrian areas and transport connections to improve visibility and safety. **Located on pages 15-16 of the draft Policy.**

And,

Objective 1.3: Improve transport access, accessible parking, wayfinding and connected paths of travel.

- Improve wayfinding across the municipality by providing clear signage, tactile markers, consistent symbols, and accessible maps.
- Identify opportunities to upgrade accessible parking and ensure safe, clear, step-free paths from parking to key destinations.
- Identify opportunities to expand accessible parking supply in high-need locations and review placement for safe paths of travel.
- Prioritise safe crossings, reduced clutter and smoother footpath surfaces along routes to public transport.
- Provide digital wayfinding information in accessible formats (e.g., alt-text maps, Easy English, high-contrast PDFs). **Located on pages 15-16 of the draft Policy.**

Possible update to the Policy

We heard clearly from our community that footpaths are a significant concern, impacting the daily lives of people using wheelchairs or mobility aids. In response, it's suggested to amend the Policy as follows:

Under **Priority 1, Objective 1.2**: Improve footpaths, kerbs, lighting, and other elements of the public realm

Add this initiative:

- ***Continue targeted accessibility upgrades to footpath surfaces and designs to support access and mobility***

Under **Priority 1 Objective 1.2**: Improve footpaths, kerbs, lighting, and other elements of the public realm

Amend the following wording:

- ***Continue to improve seating, rest points, shade, and shelter across activity centres, parks, and paths, prioritising opportunities for rest and respite at intervals along pedestrian routes.***

Specific upgrades, locations, and treatments will continue to be considered through asset renewal, transport and public-realm planning, maintenance, the Parking and Kerbside Strategy, the Footpath Trading Policy, local laws, and individual project processes. **The Policy provides a consistent Universal Design lens across these mechanisms rather than replacing them.**

Where the Victorian Government or another authority manages roads, signals or transport infrastructure, Council's role is to gather evidence, improve connecting infrastructure within its responsibility, and undertake targeted strategic advocacy. Proposals such as replacement and treatment (sawn bluestone) of particular surfaces, new speed limits, pedestrianisation, or mandatory changes to street allocation would require separate technical, statutory, financial, and community assessments. This policy consultation does not create commitments.

Feedback Theme 3: Parks, Playgrounds and Open Spaces

What did we hear	Our response
<p>Feedback indicated limited accessible and inclusive open and play spaces in Yarra, and suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for all-abilities play space - Participants wanted parks where people of all abilities can enjoy together. It was noted that inclusive playgrounds should enable children with disability to share the main play experience, including challenging and elevated elements, rather than being limited to separate ground-level equipment. • More accessible amenities - More accessible seating, shade, shelter, picnic facilities, and rest points were requested, with seating designed and located to support people with limited mobility, a need for quiet space, and rest from movement. • Accessible pathways - Participants noted that wide, firm, slip-resistant, level paths are essential to support access. Participants noted that gravel pathways can be inaccessible because they are often poorly maintained and compacted, and solid surfaces are preferred. • Low-sensory spaces - Participants valued quieter, lower-stimulation spaces, sensory gardens, and predictable layouts. • Connectivity, lighting and assistance animals - Accessible parking, drop-off zones, lighting, assistance-animal access, and maintenance affected whether open spaces were usable in practice. 	<p>This feedback is reflected in the Policy's application of universal design to parks, playgrounds and open spaces and its commitments relating to seating, shade, accessible paths, sensory and cognitive design incorporating lived-experience in design and consultation:</p> <p>Priority 1: Accessible & Inclusive Places and Transport.</p> <p>Objective 1.1: Apply a Universal Design approach to all new and upgraded Council buildings, facilities, and open spaces to achieve the best possible accessibility outcomes:</p> <p>Initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Universal Design to guide all new and upgraded buildings, parks and open-space projects. • Consider opportunities to identify, improve, and upgrade public toilets into more accessible facilities in terms of availability, safety, and wayfinding. • Integrate sensory, cognitive and neurodiversity-friendly design features into upgrades where appropriate (lighting, acoustics, quiet spaces, clear layouts). Located on pages 15-16 of the draft Policy. <p>While no change to the Policy is required, it is noted that the Policy does not inform planning or allocate resourcing for open spaces.</p> <p>Specific equipment, facilities, locations and capital priorities will be considered through open-space strategies, project design, asset renewal and future budget processes. The Policy does not guarantee particular facilities at every park.</p> <p>The feedback will inform the guidance used in open-space and playground planning, including consideration of whether people with diverse abilities can participate in the principal experience and not only access an isolated feature. Consideration of neurodiversity, cognitive conditions, mobility difference and care-giver experience.</p>

Feedback Theme 4: Inclusive Services, Programs & Information

What did we hear	Our response
<p>Feedback indicated that Council information should be easy to locate, understand and use, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More accessible online information - An accessible Council website, self-serve portals, online forms and documents accessible, clearly structured and available in formats such as audio, Easy Read, plain language with the use of captions and transcripts to convey information. • Provide non-online methods - Phone, face-to-face, and in-person assistance remained important, particularly for people with barriers to tech and digital channels. 	<p>This feedback aligns with the draft Policy's commitments:</p> <p>Priority 2: Inclusive Services, Programs & Information</p> <p>Objective 2.1: Design all Council services and programs to be inclusive, flexible and responsive.</p> <p>Objective 2.2: Make Council's website, online services and materials accessible.</p> <p>Objective 2.3: Offer multiple communication pathways and accessible customer service options</p> <p>Objective 2.4: Use inclusive consultation and engagement methods. Located on page 16 of the draft Policy</p> <p>The feedback has been analysed for consideration in actions arising from the Policy. In addition, where feedback about specific programs was provided, the relevant work</p>

- **Accessibility guides and clear information –** Community members noted the need for clear information about event and program accessibility before attending.
- **Staff capability:** Community members noted that staff capability and awareness to support flexibility is essential to supporting access
- **Inclusive programs –** Delivery needs to be supported by scheduling, staffing and practical support. Including adapting to needs such as low vision and mobility impairments to enable participation.
- **Flexible participation options -** Online or hybrid participation would support participation for all abilities.
- **Closing the loop on consultation and engagement:** Survey respondents wanted stronger follow-through when raising access issues and clearer information about how feedback influenced decision-making.

areas/teams will be notified to inform the continuous improvement of Council's programs and services.

To close the loop after engagements and issue-raising, this feedback will be considered for future actions and passed on to the relevant work areas.

Possible update to the Policy

Given the strength of feedback regarding flexibility and staff capability, it is possible to expand objective **2.1: Design all Council services and programs to be inclusive, flexible and responsive**

Adding these initiatives:

- *Support inclusive programs by embedding adaptable practices into program delivery*
- *Continue to develop a disability-confident workforce through staff capability uplift, training, and awareness of best practices to support disability inclusion.*

Feedback Theme 5: Inclusive Participation and Employment

What did we hear

Feedback highlighted the importance of:

- **Council as an inclusive employer -** Some feedback indicated that Council should lead by example through demonstrating its own employment practices.

It was noted that the Council can facilitate opportunities by promoting inclusive recruitment practices and encouraging ongoing employment by acting as an inclusive employer.
- **Creating opportunities within Council –** Community members said Council could support purposeful inclusion by creating meaningful employment, leadership, and volunteering opportunities for people with disability within Council.
- **Council as an advocate -** Respondents agreed that local employers, clubs and community organisations should be encouraged and supported to adopt more inclusive practices.

Our response

This feedback broadly aligns with the draft Policy's focus on increasing inclusive employment, leadership, volunteering and community participation across Yarra for people with disability.

Priority 3: Inclusive Participation and Employment.

Objective 3.1 Promote inclusive employment and leadership in Yarra

Objective 3.2: Encourage local employment participation pathways

Objective 3.3 Support Yarra sports clubs, recreation groups, arts and volunteer organisations to welcome participation by people with disability.

Located on page 17 of the draft Policy

The feedback reinforces the Policy's existing direction, which promotes inclusive employment to local businesses and organisations within Yarra.

Regarding Council's role as an inclusive recruiter and employer:

The UDDI Policy does not include commitments regarding Council's role as an inclusive employer. These matters are appropriately addressed within operational People and Culture policies.

Suggestions relevant to action

Suggestions gathered will be considered in the actions arising from the Policy and, where they relate to other work areas, referred to Council teams for consideration through relevant economic development, community partnership, grants, volunteering, and participation mechanisms.

Feedback Theme 6: Equity, Fairness and Safety

What did we hear	Our response
<p>Feedback indicated that community members see the following areas as important to inclusion and access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transport - Accessible and reliable public transport was central to independence, employment, health care and community participation. <p>Survey respondents raised inaccessible tram stops and vehicles, difficult boarding, unreliable services and poor connections between stops and surrounding paths.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road crossings – Feedback indicated that State-controlled road crossings require Council to advocate for timed crossings to support diverse speeds of movement, with audio and visual crossing indicators. • Information on services and programs – Community members wanted clearer, more reliable information about accessible businesses, food relief, advocacy, NDIS-related supports, and other community services. • Supporting safe and accessible housing - Feedback highlighted concerns about accessible and affordable housing, home modifications, broken lifts, and thermal comfort. • Emergency preparedness - Emergency information and planning should account for different communication, mobility, health and cultural needs. • Support through advocacy – Feedback indicated that Council has a role to advocate when other governments or agencies control transport, housing, or service systems. • Equity of access: Several community members noted that they were not confident about disability access to local businesses, festivals, and events, which has clear implications for equity and fairness. 	<p>This feedback aligns with the draft Policy, including;</p> <p>Priority 4 of the draft Policy - Fairness and Safety</p> <p>Objective 4.1 Advocate to state transport authorities for more accessible public transport.</p> <p>Objective 4.2 Support local businesses, events and festivals to improve accessibility through tools, guidance and partnerships.</p> <p>Objective 4.3 Promote accessible housing options, including advice on heritage-related upgrades and modifications.</p> <p>Objective 4.4 Strengthen access to food relief, outreach programs and community support for people with disability, families and carers.</p> <p>Objective 4.5 Improve emergency preparedness information and support for people with disability. Located on page 18 of the draft Policy.</p> <p><u>Possible updates to the Policy</u></p> <p>Suggested to change Priority 4 Inclusive participation and employment to amend Priority 4.1 to be: <i>Advocate to state transport authorities for more accessible public transport and road crossings.</i> And to add the following initiative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Advocate for crossings timed to support diverse speeds of movement and with audio and visual crossing indicators.</i> <p>Suggested to also amend Priority 4 Inclusive participation and employment under Objective 4.2 'Support local businesses, events and festivals to improve accessibility through guidance and partnerships.'</p> <p>Change to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Offer targeted support - such as brief advisory sessions, referrals and accessibility guidance - to help local businesses, events and festivals improve access.</i> <p>This means actions arising from the Policy can include support for threshold ramps to address stepped access at businesses and temporary ramps to ensure access at street events and festivals.</p> <p>Specific directories, guidance tools and information products will be considered through the actions and relevant service planning.</p> <p>As for specific feedback relating to NDIS-funded services and income-support systems that are State and Commonwealth government responsibilities, Council can provide information, link people to local services, and act as a partner and advocate.</p>

Feedback Theme 7: Representation, Belonging and Supporting Carers

What did we hear	Our response
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Feedback collected reflected the following sub-themes:

- **Representation of people with disability** – Feedback indicated that Council should support the representation of people with disability as active community members, leaders, and decision-makers by using a strength-based approach when communicating and promoting initiatives.
- **Accessible community participation** – Feedback suggested that inclusive initiatives, events and programs needed to be authentic, disability-led and connected to practical action. Participants valued inclusive cultural, recreational and social activities that created ongoing opportunities for friendship and belonging for people of all abilities.
- **Inclusive civic participation** – Several survey respondents mentioned the need for accessible ways to influence Council decisions, including alternative formats for providing feedback.
- **Carer wellbeing** - A strong theme emerged that carers need stronger recognition, information on respite pathways, and opportunities for social connection to support their own health and participation.
- **Acknowledging value of lived experience** – Feedback indicated value in stronger reporting from Council to explain how consultation and lived-experience input affects decisions.

This feedback aligns with the draft policy's commitments to representation, disability pride, challenging ableism and supporting carers:

Priority 5: Belonging and celebration

Objective 5.1 Increase the representation of people with disability in Yarra's communications, cultural outputs and public art.

Objective 5.2 Celebrate awareness days and events that promote disability pride and challenge stigma.

Objective 5.3: Acknowledge the essential role of carers and support their wellbeing and participation.

Objective 5.4 Promote opportunities for people with disability to engage in local arts, culture, community life and volunteering.

Objective 5.5 Create and promote inclusive events and social connection opportunities for people with disability and carers. **Located on Page 19-20 of the draft Policy.**

Specific initiatives will be developed through the actions, communications planning, community partnerships, grants and existing service programs.

The feedback about influence and closing the engagement loop will be considered for future action and passed onto the relevant work area (Communications) for consideration.

Possible update to the Policy

To further support carers, it is suggested that Priority 5 – Belonging and Celebration be amended to stipulate that, under objective 5.3, **Acknowledge the essential role of carers and support their wellbeing and participation.**

Add the initiative:

- *Consider carers as a priority population in the development of Council's programs and services.*